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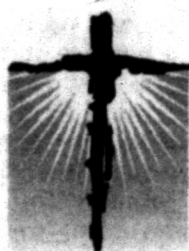
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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Board acquires historic Library Building

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) has approved the purchase of the final parcel of real estate not already owned by the Board on the downtown Jackson city block that includes the Baptist Building.

Located at the intersection of Yazoo and North State Streets on the southeast corner of the block, the building was constructed in 1954 to house the Jackson Public Library.

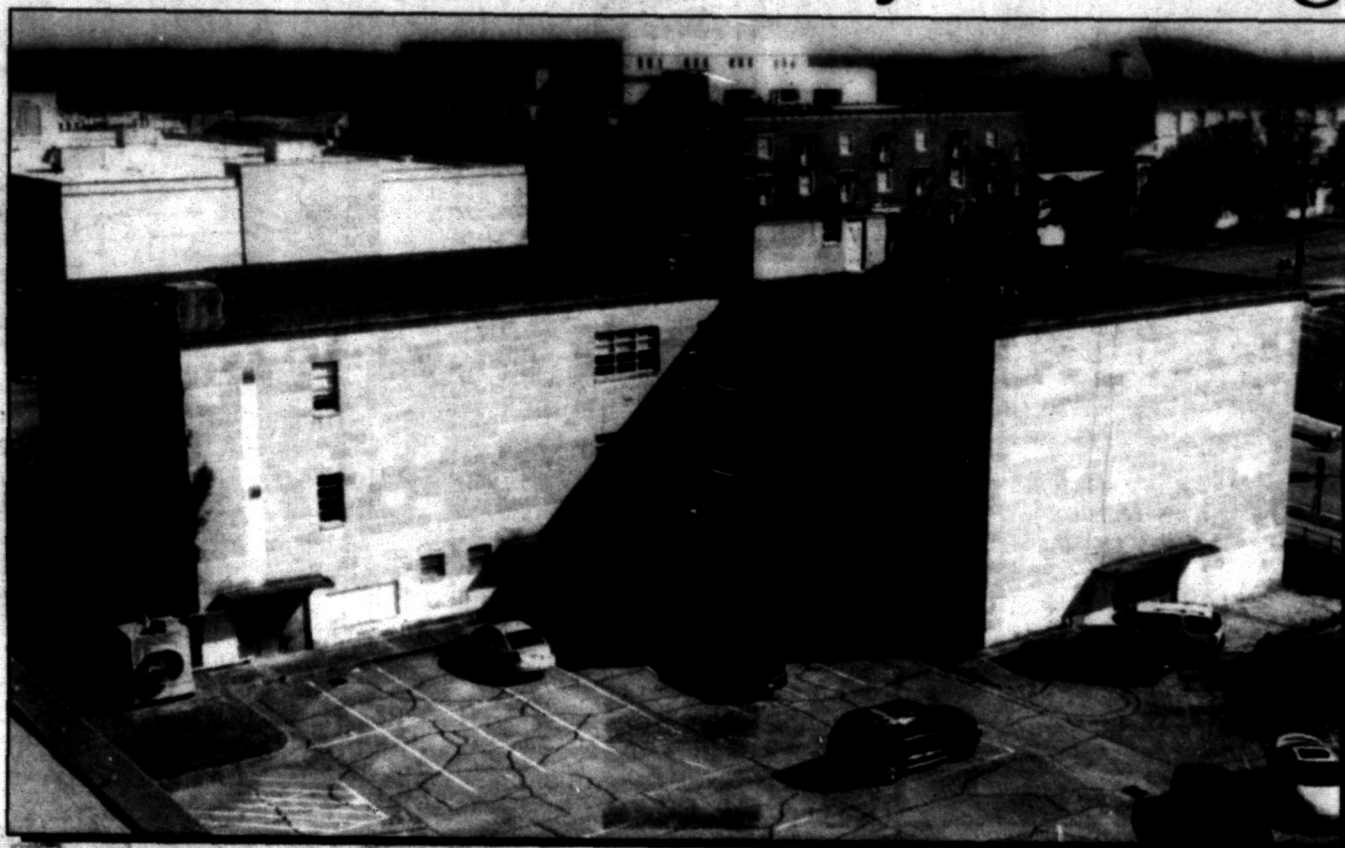
The library moved across North State Street to more spacious facilities in the 1970s. The building since served as headquarters for the City of Jackson's Cultural and Human Services Department but has been vacant for several years.

Barri A. Shirley, MBCB associate executive director for business services, said the negotiated purchase price was \$725,000, which was below the most recent appraisal of the property conducted in June of this year.

"It is significant that we were able to pay for the property out of accumulated funds that have

built up over the past two years in the Capital Needs Account. We are grateful to have acquired it debt-free," said Jim Futral, MBCB executive director.

Gary Richardson, pastor of North Oxford Church, Oxford, and MBCB president at the time of the purchase, said, "The Convention Board thought that the purchase of this property is excellent stewardship of the God's money. We will



BUILDING PURCHASED — The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has voted to purchase the former Jackson Public Library, which was the only parcel of real estate on the block that includes the Baptist Building in downtown Jackson that was not already owned by the board. The rear of the building and the parking lot are pictured here in a photograph taken from the roof of the Baptist Building next door. The view is looking to the southeast. (Photo by Barri A. Shirley)

now own the entire block in a strategic location in downtown Jackson.

"That will certainly enhance the security of our current facility, as well as provide numerous options for expansion and parking. This was a God-given opportunity that we simply could not pass up."

The property, which will now be known simply as the Library Building, rests on a 160-by-160 square feet lot, with

more than 27,500 square feet of space inside on three floors including a basement. Both short- and long-term plans are being developed to renovate the property and secure the entire block.

The property is the original site of First Presbyterian Church of Jackson. A watershed event in the civil rights movement occurred there while the current building housed the Jackson Public Library. On the morning of March 27, 1961, nine students from historically-black Tougaloo College in Jackson attempted to use the whites-only library and were arrested.

The "Tougaloo Nine" incident sparked further demonstrations and protests in Jackson and around the state, and is credited by some observers with turning the tide of the civil rights movement in Mississippi.

"For some time we have needed additional space for the expansion of some of our work and for the possibility of training areas, but we were unable to add or find any offices. While we cannot use the building immediately, we will be able to clean up the area and secure the building, which will be a help to everyone in the area," Futral said.

"The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board property is now one entire city block. We are truly thankful for the blessings of God in allowing us to acquire this building. We trust that while it has been the site of First Presbyterian Church, then the Jackson Library and other usages, it will henceforth be used by Mississippi Baptists to serve our Lord and to bring glory to His name," he said.

NAMB to debut missions program Nov. 26

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — The North American Mission Board (NAMB) will launch the pilot of a new 30-minute TV program, On Mission Xtra, on Nov. 26 at 8:30 p.m. central time on the FamilyNet television network.

Twelve more OMX episodes are in production by NAMB and scheduled to be delivered to FamilyNet in January. The Atlanta-based FamilyNet, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is seen in more than 30 million households in more than 200 markets via cable systems and broadcasters in the United States.

According to NAMB, On Mission Xtra will be a dynamic blend of missionary features, studio interviews and profiles of people who are reaching North America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "From adventures to heartwarming stories, On Mission Xtra will

inspire you to look at your own mission field with a new perspective and will challenge you to take part in God's mission," said Brandon Pickett, NAMB's communications team leader and OMX executive producer.

Geoff Hammond, NAMB's president, called the new television show "an opportunity to spotlight the huge mission field of North America."

"Although we need many more workers in this field, there are thousands of missionaries serving right now with amazing stories of what God is doing through Southern Baptists," Hammond said. "I'm so glad people from coast to coast and beyond will now not only read about these stories but see them each and every week on their television screens through FamilyNet."

Actress Erin Bethea, who stars in the highly successful Christian film

Fireproof and co-hosts On Mission Xtra with Brent Moxey, said OMX is "unlike anything I've ever done before. I think the style of OMX reflects the message of the show, which is to get Christians to be relevant and think outside the box."

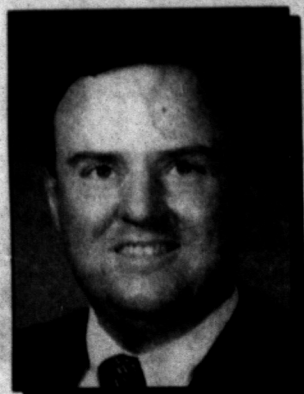
"The show is a little bit different than a lot of Christian TV programming," added Bethea, a 26-year-old Georgia native who now makes her home in Orlando. "I think it'll get people's attention. It's snappier, and it has a good balance of humor and the serious message we're trying to put across."

"The show has a ton of variety with stories from people all over North America, musical acts and interviews with ministry leaders."

For a FamilyNet TV schedule or to check on FamilyNet availability, visit www.familynet.com.



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Our Thanksgiving prayer

Among the original American holidays on our calendar, Thanksgiving often harbors our warmest thoughts and deepest sentimentalities.

The World Book Encyclopedia describes it this way: "Thanksgiving is usually a family day, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. The very mention of Thanksgiving often calls up memories of kitchens and pantries crowded with good things to eat. Thanksgiving is also a time for serious thinking, church services, and prayer."

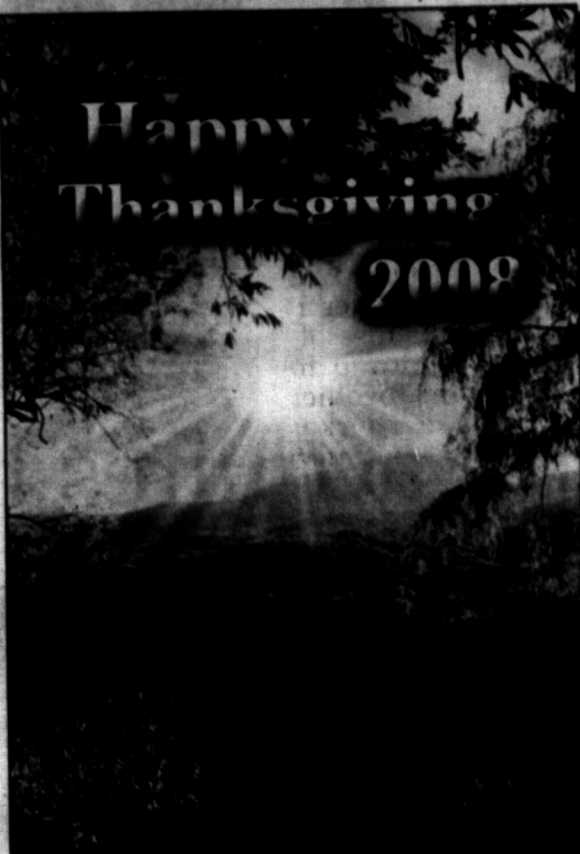
Indeed it is. In our present-day, politically correct/revisionist culture, we can be discouraged from understanding the true meaning of the holiday.

We have lately been induced to believe that Thanksgiving is composed of little more than a bacchanalian orgy and football games, devoid of religious significance. After all, a lot of Americans act that way. Nothing could be farther from the truth, as evidenced by a brief review of unrevised history.

The first Thanksgiving was observed less than a year after the Plymouth colonists came ashore in Massachusetts. The harsh first winter in the New World wiped out nearly half the colonists, but 1621's bumper harvest put an end to the famine and its associated problems.

There was such rejoicing in the colony that the people began to set aside a time of celebration and thanksgiving for their abundance—which they readily acknowledged came from God.

The observance grew so rapidly that Massachusetts Governor William Bradford declared a formal three-day thanksgiving



feast to begin on July 30, 1623. Thanksgiving quickly took root in the other colonies and continued to be observed during the Revolutionary War.

After the Revolutionary War, President George Washington issued a proclamation that codified a special day of thanks in the young United States of America. Most of the states took Washington's lead and adopted their own days of thanksgiving at various times of the year.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared a national Thanksgiving holiday on the last Thursday of November, and the states soon realigned their obser-

vances.

President Franklin Roosevelt set the holiday one week earlier in 1939, to lengthen the Christmas shopping season in the midst of the Great Depression.

The U.S. Congress was not pleased, however, and voted in 1941 to return Thanksgiving to the traditional fourth Thursday in November. They backed up their decision by creating a formal legal holiday on that date.

For thousands of years, people around the world have held harvest festivals and observed thanksgiving times for the gift of God's bounty, but the unique American holiday called Thanksgiving should hold special meaning for us, the modern-day benefactors of God's blessings beyond all forms of measurement.

Our agricultural system feeds us well, with enough left over to feed much of the world. More than at any time in our history, our generation is sheltered from the elements and guarded from disease. Though our military is stretched and many brave men and women are giving their lives even today for our freedoms, we are largely protected from many of the unpleasant realities of the world. When our biggest complaints are about potholes and poorly performing football teams, we're living pretty close to Easy Street.

We make a grave mistake, however, when we take all that for granted and begin to believe that we are responsible for our own good fortune and security (Deuteronomy 8:6-19), as many Americans apparently presume.

This Thanksgiving season, be sure to focus your thanks toward the One who provided the food you will eat, the home in which you will eat it, the family with which you will enjoy it, and the means to do all that and much, much more.

Come to think of it, that should be our Thanksgiving prayer 365 days a year.

GUEST OPINION:

Accepted, forgiven, forever changed

By Melanie Spinks
Charleston, S.C.



I grew up in Southern Baptist church culture. During adolescence, I found myself overwhelmed by homosexual attractions. I had no idea how to fight something so powerful. In college, I became involved in my first lesbian relationship and remained in the gay community for over eight years.

When the Lord called me out of that life, I joined an Internet support group that encouraged me to seek out a local church. I liked to listen to a local pastor named Charles Stanley on Sunday mornings, so though terrified of rejection I decided to visit his church the following Sunday. I had no idea he was famous.

I cried all the way through the service. How I loved the worship songs, these God-centered love songs that were directed to His heart. By the end of the first song, I knew I was home.

It took a while to get up the courage to visit Sunday School; a man named Brian invited me to attend a class he taught called Living Stones. Looking around the room, I felt I had nothing in common with those people. "Everyone here is holy except me," I thought.

I began to loosen up as those in the class shared their own personal struggles with

sin. Gradually, the images in my mind of saintly icons gave way to real people to whom I could relate.

It took about a year for me to gather the courage to make friends with other women. I went home and cried when one woman named Bonnie invited me to sit beside her during class. We got to know each other, and I grew closer to them than anyone in years.

It was so freeing that they liked me unselfishly. I was asked to share my personal testimony with the entire singles ministry one night, and I agreed and prepared a benign and general testimony—void of information about my struggles—about how I had found Christ.

That afternoon, I felt burdened to tell others about my past. I lay on the floor before

the Lord all afternoon, begging Him not to make me do this. I was so afraid that if they found out, they would cast me out but He whispered in my heart, "Do it. I'm going to set you free."

I had only a few minutes to go to my friends and briefly apologize for not sharing beforehand what they were about to hear. It was as if time were suspended as I studied their faces expecting rejection, but I was met with tears and open arms.

The church has helped me overcome and cast off the shame of the past and live in the forgiveness found in the wounds of Christ. They have helped me to see myself as a woman among women, freeing me from lifelong feelings of inferiority by their acceptance of me as a female.

They have helped me to

realize my true identity in Jesus Christ. They have helped strengthen my walk with Jesus in the display of their faith in the simple things in life. They have increased my love of God's Word in the sharing of what they learn in daily Bible Study.

They have helped construct in me a theological framework through books and spiritual education that undergirds me and sustains me through trials. They have shown me the love of Jesus in their willingness not only to confront sin, but to extend a helping hand. They have shown me the long suffering of Christ in not giving up on me, but in walking the extra mile with me.

The Living Stones Sunday School class will never know the depths of how they touched my life for eternity. This is not a group of people trained in how to reach out to those who struggle with homosexuality. Although such training is indeed useful, they simply gave me what they had to offer—their very lives.

Because of them, I am forever changed.

Spinks is the senior designer and founder of Spinks Creative in Charleston, S.C. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. For information about the SBC's Task Force on Ministry to Homosexuals, visit www.sbc.thewayout.com.

Chaplains deal with emotional toll of war

TONGDUCHON, South Korea (BP) — Chaplain (CPT) Edward Choi understands what it means to lose men in combat. Choi lost 31 soldiers and conducted 18 memorial services during his 15-month deployment in Iraq.

In fact, Choi's unit, which was part of the 126th Infantry Battalion based in Schweinfurt, Germany, had more casualties in Iraq than any unit since Vietnam.

It was challenging, Choi recalled, to find unique comments to offer at the memorial services. "I didn't want a cookie-cutter service," Choi said. "These soldiers were real people with real lives, and I wanted to honor them. Every two weeks I was either preparing or conducting a memorial service."

The horrors he witnessed left their mark. In about the 12th or 13th month of his deployment, Choi recognized that he was experiencing compassion fatigue. Once his deployment ended a few months later, Choi attended the Chaplain Captain's Career Course, or C4.

At C4, the chaplains were able to talk, share and pray together," Choi said. It was then that he realized that his fatigue was not unusual and that he was not alone.

As Choi began to heal mentally and emotionally, he realized he could make a difference in the lives of other soldiers. While in Iraq, Choi and his assistant started Operation Healing Heart to help soldiers heal spiritually, mentally and physically.

Through Operation Healing Heart, Choi devel-

oped religious programs, sports activities and recreation events designed to provide some sense of normalcy and stability in the war zone.

Then, Choi transferred to Camp Walker in Daegu, Korea, where 40% of the soldiers have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Together with social services worker Don Guffey, Choi initiated what he calls the Warrior's Huddle, a simple support group to allow soldiers to talk through their experiences and the spiritual and emotional implications of those experiences. The group meets weekly and has been well-received because it allows soldiers to find ways to integrate their service into their daily lives.

Guffey, a combat veteran who served with the Special Forces in Vietnam, helps facilitate meetings of the Warrior's Huddle. "Mr. Guffey has a real heart for combat veterans," Choi said, "and he understands their unique needs in a way that others can't."

While Choi believes that the Army has made great strides in understanding and treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among soldiers, improvements can be made. "Some think that briefings on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are enough," Choi said, "but it takes much more than that."

In the Warrior's Huddle, Choi seeks to celebrate the achievements and the service of those who fought in combat. "We don't need to see our combat veterans as victims, but as victors," he said. "We need to see them as resilient men and women who are sharing their



WOUNDED IN ACTION — Army Chaplain Edward Choi (right), now stationed in South Korea, received a Purple Heart for wounds he received in Iraq. "I only had minor injuries," Choi says, "and I didn't want the medal in light of the soldiers I'd seen who were seriously injured or killed." Choi now uses the medal to speak of his fallen comrades, "to proudly share their stories." (BP photo)

sacred story because it's important and it changed their lives.

"I explain to the soldiers that God is using these experiences to prepare them, and I let them know that they are conquering warriors. I often tell soldiers the story of Elijah at Mount Carmel. Elijah had been in combat with the prophets of Baal, and I believe he was probably suffering from PTSD."

Choi explains to his soldiers that God took Elijah aside, spoke to him, and healed him.

It is difficult for the average American to understand the experiences of combat veterans, Choi acknowledged. While he knows that churches back home want to help, he

said today's combat veterans need to share their stories with those who've also experienced it any combat arena.

Keith Travis, leader of the chaplaincy program for the North American Mission Board, agreed. "As more and more of our military return from deployment in the combat zone, we need to think about ways that we can offer training to churches to reach out to the combat veterans among them," Travis said.

Choi noted, "I believe it is a spiritual principle that God will stretch you to your limit, but He knows the limit. When the limit comes, He will take you to a place of renewal, rejuvenation and refreshing."

Looking back

10 years ago

Mississippi Baptists lead the way among four states that banded together to offer food relief to Honduran victims who lost everything during Hurricane Mitch, described by some experts as the "Storm of the Century."

20 years ago

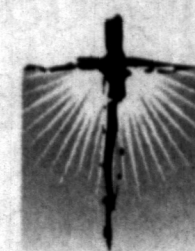
A group of 13 members from Parkway Church, plus one member from Highland Church, both in Jackson, travel to Barao d Taquara, a suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to build a chapel. Harim Powell, a Parkway member and former Mission Service Corps volunteer, organizes the trip.

50 years ago

A gift of \$50,000 to Mississippi College for the construction and equipping of the college's new library building was announced to messengers attending the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Wednesday session, which was held on the school's Clinton campus.

New Guidestone program

DALLAS (BP) — This fall, many Southern Baptist churches and ministries will have access to property and casualty insurance and risk management services from GuideStone Agency Services. The GuideStone Property & Casualty (P&C) Program will gradually roll out regionally over the next year. The program offers churches property, general liability, workers compensation and auto insurance. Specialty coverages such as abuse and molestation, directors and officers liability, and pastoral counseling also are available. Insured churches have access to risk management services which include educational seminars and programs on risk evaluation, tools to help reduce risk, and preferred pricing from a vendor that provides volunteer background checks. "This is a highly customized insurance program," said Douglas D. Day, GuideStone executive officer who is giving leadership to GuideStone Agency Services. "This program is designed specifically to meet the needs of Southern Baptist churches and ministries, and we're proud that we can bring them not only affordable insurance coverage but comprehensive educational materials and risk management tools. We want our churches to be able to protect everything from their people and their physical property to their intangible assets." As church and ministry staffs stay busier than ever serving their growing, diverse communities, GuideStone continues to support them, GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins noted. "We trust this new service will be another opportunity for GuideStone, through its insurance agency affiliate, to partner with our Southern Baptist churches and ministries," Hawkins said. "Our goal is to help churches be the best stewards of their resources so they can focus on their calling and mission." For specific information, call (888) 984-8433.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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TZQENI, DEP WQ FDNLF-
BLQP, DEP TADLFQ NUQ
EDOQ YB NUQ ZYAP IYVA
HYP, NUDN UDNU
PQDZN MYEPAYVFI
MLNU IYV: DEP OI
TQYTZQ FUDZZ EQJQA
WQ DFUDOQP.

GYQZ NMY: NMQENI-FLS

Clue: T=P

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm Fifty One One

THANKSGIVING CHECKLIST

In surveys, Thanksgiving Day is generally acknowledged as people's favorite holiday. There are a lot of different reasons for that being true including no gifts, no specific or gaudy decorations, and very few activities or programs to prepare for or endure. Over 300 million Americans enjoy the day first acknowledged by President Abraham Lincoln as a day set aside to give thanks. More and more it is acclaimed as the kickoff to the holiday season, which according to the merchandisers includes Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. It is a period of buying frenzy and, of course, it is a big-ticket time for merchants.

For most people Thanksgiving Day is just a special time to slow down, enjoy, and, for those who recognize the source of all of our gifts, a time to thank God. Thanksgiving in America is built around a number of components on which you can extract the ones that are most meaningful to you, pause, and give thanks. Just look at all of the Thanksgiving issues for which we can be grateful:

Food — Having learned the model prayer from Jesus, His followers should readily ask, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread." It seems only appropriate that we would take time to express our appreciation to the Giver of wonderful gifts. It was the Pilgrim leader, Edward Winslow, who wrote, "Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling so that we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had

gathered the fruits of our labor." The picture of the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving comes to us from that expression. It is somewhat amazing to think about those early settlers pausing to celebrate and to thank God for His bounty when about half of them had died from the numerous struggles they had encountered. How much more should we be compelled out of a deep gratitude in our hearts to thank God for all of the great food supply available to us.

Football — While no doubt many of you do not appreciate this part of Thanksgiving, others of you with great joy look forward to relaxing on a Thursday and watching the various match-ups whether you follow the Packers, Cowboys, Colts, or Patriots. You wait to see if your team is going to win or do something extraordinary in the game. While it has become an American fixture on Thanksgiving Day, it is for some a great delight and for others a source of irritation. While it probably accurately is described as entertainment, it is also for many simply a relaxing diversion from other activities in life.

Family — While the family has certainly been in transition and the American family has more accurately been described

as being in turmoil, there is something wonderful about getting together with people that you really care about and who genuinely care about you. At Thanksgiving, it is a good time to set aside issues, differences, differing preferences, and enjoy one another. If you have a tendency to let little things irritate you or to allow small things to warp your attitude, just pause and think about families that may be gathering whose family members may be serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, or some other remote corner of the world and are not blessed to be together as you are.

Faith — This ought to be the very center of our thanksgiving as we take opportunity to refresh and renew our relationship with God as we praise Him for His goodness. James writes in his little book, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above" (James 1:17). From the hand of God, we are truly the recipients of incredible and immeasurable blessings. Thanksgiving should be about our faith that extends beyond just looking at all of the gifts that God has given us and looks to the Giver Himself. When Jesus fed the 5000, He knew that many of them hardly noticed or cared that they were filled and blessed. All they were concerned about was

having their appetites satisfied. God deliver us, or maybe better expand us, to reach beyond just turkey and stuffing to focus on the goodness of our God.

This is a need for many of us for the holidays, including Thanksgiving, which can be a sad time. For some it can be a heartbreaking time for it is a reminder of losses and loneliness. It is a time when we need to determine to focus on the wealth of what we have received and not on what we do not have. Many people are greatly blessed and do not even notice it because they choose to turn their focus on what they miss. Look at what you have. Look at your friends, the family members who are seeking to be supportive, and the measure of health that you do enjoy. Make a list, and if by chance you cannot see anything good happening in or around you, you need to just pause and ask God to open your eyes and let you see.

Fast — I am not talking about speed but I am talking about fast as in biblically doing without some things. Why not take Thanksgiving as a great time to go on a fast? I probably would have no takers for a fast if it related to turkey, dressing, and sweet potatoes. Why not go on a fast and do without whining, complaining, and being critical or judgmental? Try fasting the entire week of Thanksgiving and leave off harsh words, angry responses, and demeaning expressions.

Just try it! You may like it and I can assure you that others will love it.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

COLLEGE AND SEMINARY NEWS

1. Trustmark Bank executive Art Stevens will be the guest speaker at a Dec. 4, 11:30 a.m. luncheon to honor 70 outstanding Mississippi College students inducted into the "Who's Who Among Students."
2. Alan McKittrick, left, grandson of Erle Stanley and Natalie Talbert Gardner, recently visited Blue Mountain College for a Founder's Day program about the 7-foot Bosendorfer piano that his sister, Valerie Naso, bequeathed to the college. Natalie Gardner was a student at BMC at the turn of the 20th century; her husband was the author of the Perry Mason novels. She passed her fondness for the college to her grandchildren. Shown are McKittrick and BMC president Bettye Rogers Coward.



2. McKittrick and Coward

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MS POSTINGS

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, BRANDON, Miss., is accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music and youth. We are a church of 175 that needs to be 500. If this challenge excites you, please send resume to P.O. Box 398, Brandon, MS 39043 or email to jeff@gracebaptistonline.net.

NURSERY WORKER NEEDED: BED-BABY room, during all services. Mail resume to Kathy Bayles, Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Rd., Byram, MS 39272.

SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH, MARSHALL County, Miss. Seeking part-time youth director with potential for growth. Please send resume to search committee, P.O. Box 734, Potts Camp, MS 38659.

PELAHATCHIE BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a part-time minister of music for worship services, adult, youth, and children's choirs. Please forward resume to the Pelahatchie Baptist Church, search committee, P.O. Box 876, Pelahatchie, MS 39145, attn: Due McKinnon. Email: due@rankincounty.org.

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Trustees hear financial concerns, global achievements

HOUSTON (BP) — While celebrating the largest number of missionaries under appointment in recent years, trustees of the International Mission Board (IMB) also heard some cautionary finance reports during their Nov. 10-11 meeting in Houston.

The potential effects of investment losses, a weakened dollar, and flattened giving to the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering could have a significant impact on the board's work next year.

Those economic pressures forced board members to approve a budget for 2009 that includes no room to exceed the total number of missionaries currently under appointment. Attrition in the missionary force (completions, retirements, resignations, and deaths) creates the need to appoint new missionaries each year, but IMB President Jerry Rankin, a Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, said the ability to expand the missionary force beyond current levels rests in the hands of Southern Baptists.

"God has always proved His faithfulness through the giving of His people that His mission might be carried out around the world. Even in these austere economic times we must press forward in our vision to reach a lost world and be obedient to our Great Commission task.

"God continues to call missionaries from Southern Baptist churches, and we pray Southern Baptists will not be deterred from providing the support needed in spite of the personal sacrifice that might entail."

The \$319.8 million budget approved by trustees marks a \$15 million increase over 2008 expenditures, \$10 million of which will be used to offset the rising cost of support for missionaries already on the field.

On Tuesday evening, trustees appointed 105 new missionaries at Houston's First Church, bringing the current number of field personnel to 5,541. The Houston group is the third-largest number appointed since at least 1980.

Trustee chairman Paul Chitwood of First Church in Mt. Washington, Ky., acknowledged that this feat, in spite of a tough economy, is much to the credit of Southern Baptists and God's eternal glory.

"The question facing us now as we look to the future is: Will we again experience a setback?" Chitwood asked. "Southern Baptists will decide the answer to that question as they give their gifts through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this year."

Supporting missionaries

Southern Baptists gave a record \$150.4 million to the Lottie Moon offering in 2007. The goal for 2008 is \$170 million — about a 16% increase.

"You can't get more for your money than sending a missionary," said David Steverson, IMB treasurer and vice president for finance. "That's an investment — not an investment that you put in your portfolio — it's an investment in the lives of people around the world."

Despite a gloomy economic forecast, there was some good news. The percentage of the budget used for stateside administration and promotion dropped nearly one percent, from 15.44% to 14.56% percent.

The dollar also is making a recovery in the world marketplace, gaining as much as 20% over some foreign currencies in the past four months. Though the gain has not yet achieved parity with the dollar's buying power prior to the decline, another 20% increase would put the dollar on a one-to-one exchange rate with the euro — the currency of the European Union.

Gains like these are beneficial because nearly 85% of the IMB's budget is spent overseas.

Steverson added that the IMB's well-diversified portfolio helped minimize investment losses during the market crash, falling about 19% compared to an average market drop of 40%.

"Our faith is in the Lord — not in our bank balance," Steverson said. "I'm convinced that in trying times we need to be dependent on God. Maybe that's what He's trying to tell us, 'Depend on Me, not on your resources.' So that's what we're going to do."

Chitwood called on trustees to make Southern Baptist churches aware of the need to give and challenged them to "dig deeply" into their own pockets for the Lottie Moon offering.

"I pray our generosity would match that of the Macedonian churches who gave as much as they were able, and [the Apostle] Paul says, gave even beyond their ability to do so," Chitwood said.

"I know these are challenging days — they're challenging days in my church. They're challenging days for all Southern Baptist churches but by God's grace, and through our sacrifice, if we give beyond what we're able to give, I trust God will honor that by both meeting the needs in our homes and churches and meeting the needs on the mission field."

Annual statistical report

Trustees were given good reason to answer Chitwood's challenge. They were presented with record numbers of church growth and Gospel advance in the 2008 Annual Statistical Report, reporting missions data from the previous year.

Southern Baptist missionaries and their partners worked to share the Gospel among more than 1,190 people groups, about 100 of them for the first



MAKING COMMITMENT — Joyce Stevens of Illinois joins other International Mission Board trustees as they sign their names on a large globe during their Nov. 10-11 meeting in Houston, in what IMB President Jerry Rankin described as an act symbolizing trustees' commitment to help complete the Great Commission. (BP photo)

time. Previously no one had been trying to start new churches among them. The newly-engaged groups have a combined population of more than 188 million, nearly all of them less than two percent evangelical Christian.

In 2007 missionaries and their partners also saw the number of overseas churches climb to the highest level in history of nearly 182,000, surpassing the 10-million-member mark for the first time. Of that number, 27,000 of those churches were newly started.

Baptisms topped 565,900, an average of about one baptism per minute.

Gordon Fort, vice president of the IMB's office of overseas operations, told trustees these numbers represent the "tip of the iceberg" in terms of understanding the complete picture of God's work around the world. He explained that church-planting movements grow quickly beyond the IMB's ability to track them.

None of this would be possible without Southern Baptist churches, he said. "We need your partnership more than ever," Fort told trustees. "We need your influence among your [Southern Baptist] constituency. We need you to go back to your churches and share with them the vision that God has given and how they can come alongside and be involved with us."

West Africa regional leader Randy Arnett told trustees about the powerful impact that strategically involved churches can make on the mission field. He

shared the story of a particular area in West Africa that is home to 350,000 Bambara people.

Before 2007, there were only a handful of small, struggling, Christian outreach groups among some 336 villages in this area but in February 2007, a partnering Southern Baptist church began to send short-term teams to the Bambara. Soon, a second church joined the effort.

By the end of 2007, five Southern Baptist churches had committed to send teams at least four times a year. One of those churches, Beulah Church in Hopkins, S.C., averages 200 in Sunday worship and sends a team every six weeks.

"Today, nearly 200 [Bambara] have been baptized, but more importantly, [the handful of] outreach groups have turned into 36 churches and outreach groups," Arnett said. "And it's because Southern Baptist churches have caught a vision."

Reorganization

Trustees also affirmed a number of new recommendations related to the rollout of a sweeping internal reorganization.

The reorganization is designed to accelerate the board's work overseas by maximizing the effectiveness of frontline missionaries while creating a more efficient, cost-effective structure of administration and support.

As part of this reorganization, trustees endorsed Randy Pegues as vice president for the newly created office of global logistics support and Tom Williams as vice president of the office of global personnel.

Pegues currently serves as an associate vice president in the office of overseas operations. Williams heads the IMB's Western Europe region. They will remain in their current roles until completing the transition to their new assignments in mid-2009.

Trustees also affirmed three existing vice presidents: Gordon Fort, the office of global strategy (currently known as the office of overseas operations); Ken Winter, office of church and partner service; and David Steverson, office of finance.

Trustees also endorsed personnel selections for eight new leadership positions known as "affinity group strategists." The strategists' names were not made public for security reasons. They will be responsible for leading each of the IMB's eight affinity groups.

Affinity groups are large groupings of related peoples who share similar origins, languages and cultures — a lens through which missionaries can focus and coordinate strategy to share the Gospel.

Chitwood thanked the trustees for their support and patience during the reorganization process, a task he compared to eating an elephant.

"You know how you eat an elephant? One bite at a time," he said. "As we undertake the process of reorganizing an organization that stretches to nearly 200 countries, with 6,000-plus employees and a budget nearly a third of a billion dollars, we have an elephant on our hands."

JUST FOR THE RECORD



3. Moak and Lewis



4. First Church Jackson, Madison Campus



5. Thomas and Keen



6. New Prospect Church and Alpine Church

1. **Holly Springs Church, Foxworth**, is presenting the Hanging of the Green Nov. 30, 10 a.m. Ron Jordan, pastor.
2. **Mt. Vernon Church, Liberty**, met and exceeded its State Missions Offering goal of \$2000 by collecting \$2,100. Clint Penalbee, pastor.
3. **Clear Branch Church, Wesson**, ordained Steve Lewis as deacon Nov. 2. Shown are pastor Wayne Moak and Lewis.
4. The Madison Campus of **First Church, Jackson**, recently received the Eagle

Award for Sunday School growth from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. Sunday School enrollment at the Madison Campus increased from 24 in August 2006 to 243 in August 2008. Huey Dedmon (right) growth consultant in the MBCB Sunday School Department, presented the award to campus pastor Mark Farris (left) and Sunday School director Al Weeks.

5. **Bethel Church, Louisville**, ordained Greg Thomas to the gospel ministry Oct. 26. Shown are Thomas and pastor David Keen.
6. First through third graders of **New Prospect Church, Brookhaven** and **Alpine Church, Pineville, La.**, met in Natchez in October after becoming pen pals over a year ago. Shown are the children.
7. **Salem Church** participated in Scott County GA day Aug. 2 at Branch Church, Morton. Shown are Tallie Johnson, Belle Yarbrough, and Baylee Buckley.
8. The children's group of **Cedar Grove Church, Columbia**, went to the Pumpkin Patch in Collins Oct. 18. Shown are the participants.
9. **First Church, Richland**, recently ordained Freddy Ahrend and Bill Tanner as deacons. Shown are pastor Bill Patterson, Ahrend, Tanner, and their wives.
10. **First Church, Benndale**, honored Martha Dixon, left, and Margaret David, right, with plaques for 38 years and 17 years of music service, respectively, Oct. 5.

11. **Algoma Church, Algoma**, is presenting its 17th annual drive-thru nativity Dec. 5 - 6, 6 - 9 p.m., displaying five well-known scenes portraying the birth of Jesus. Free.
12. Samaritan Counseling Services, a division of **Baptist Medical Center, Jackson**, hosted a consortium Aug. 18 which sponsors the Congregational Nurse program. Lavern Barnes was honored for her contribution in the development of an outstanding Congregational Health program in the local church.



7. Salem Church GAs



8. Cedar Grove Church



9. First Church Richland deacon ordination



10. Dixon and David



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Winter 2008

"Here's the Church; Here's the Steeple"

The well-known children's rhyme asserts "Here's the church; Here's the steeple. Open the doors to see all of the people." While reciting this verse, one's hands are fashioned such that the index fingers form the church's steeple while the other fingers are tucked inside to represent the people. The rhyme continues, "Close the door, hear them pray. Open the doors and they all run away." Smiles and giggles of delight often accompany this exercise when young children attempt to coordinate their hand motions with the rhyme that signifies the church gathering for worship and scattering for ministry beyond the walls of the building.

Smiles and giggles of delight aren't always present, however, when congregations are faced with the difficult choices related to disbanding their church. Such decisions confront churches for a variety of reasons including dwindling membership and governmental action. Regardless of

the reasons, every decision to disband involves significant change for the church. The challenges associated with such change may involve an exchange of ministry and the accompanying decision to rearrange the focus of ministry by channeling resources in perpetual fashion toward other mission and ministry opportunities.

This edition of Foundation News is designed to encourage churches faced with the prospects of disbanding by illustrating how other churches have embraced the future with the joy of knowing that the Kingdom principles and goals upon which their church was established can continue even after the weekly gatherings for worship, Bible study, and fellowship cease.

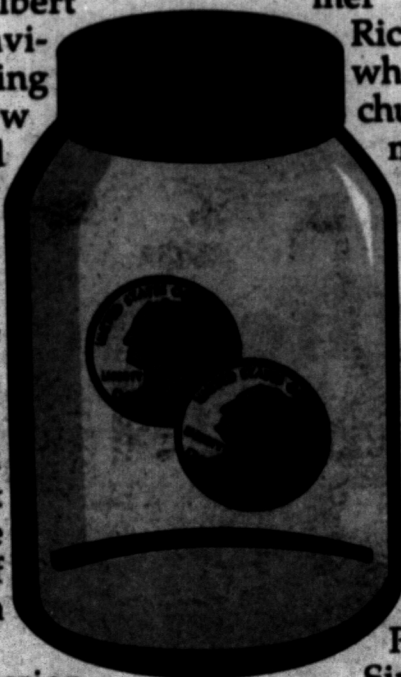


Daniel Hall
Executive Director
Mississippi Baptist Foundation



Fifty Cents in a Fruit Jar: Santa Rosa Baptist Church

The late Albert McQueen envisioned opening the doors of a new church building and seeing crowds of people gather for worship, Bible study, and fellowship. In pursuit of this divinely-appointed goal, Mr. McQueen offered fifty cents in a fruit jar to jumpstart the building program of the Santa Rosa Baptist Church.



mer pastor, the Rev. Richard Luebbert, who encouraged the church to invest the money in Kingdom ministry. In response to this challenge, the "Santa Rosa Memorial Trust Fund" was established with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation with the annual earnings designated for the Cooperative Program.

Beginning as a mission on November 21, 1947, a small band of believers met in the old Aaron Academy under the leadership of Rev. Olyn Sims. Though located in Hancock County, the mission was accepted into the Pearl River Baptist Association on October 2, 1949. On the occasion of the church's first Vacation Bible School following the completion of a new educational building in 1953, Mrs. McQueen declared "There has been an exceptionally fine spirit among the students and faculty." A decade later, however, the winds of change blew across the region as the church was forced to disband in 1963 when the federal government determined that the property on which the church facilities were located was needed for the N.A.S.A test site.

Although the government compensated the church for the land, the congregation was in a quandary concerning the use of the funds. The fervent prayer of each member was "Lord, show us what to do." The answer to this prayer came through a for-

Since the memorial fund was established, the Foundation has distributed over \$150,000 in earnings to the Cooperative Program. During the past fiscal year alone (July 2007 - June 2008), over \$3,200 was distributed for the benefit of the Cooperative Program from the "Santa Rosa Memorial Trust Fund."

Interestingly enough, the amount distributed from the memorial trust during the twelve months ending June 30, 2008 represents a larger contribution to the Cooperative Program than the CP contributions of approximately one-third of the Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi. In other words, over 700 churches that meet regularly for worship, Bible study, and fellowship gave less to the Cooperative Program than a church that no longer exists. Truly, Santa Rosa is a church which died yet lives on due to a group of committed Christians whose foresight and initiative included the ministry of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation



to extend the witness of the Santa Rosa Baptist Church throughout Pearl River county and around the world.

Although the membership of the Santa Rosa Baptist Church scattered across Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama following the disbandment in 1963, a reunion continues to be held annually on the second Sunday in November. Less than two weeks ago, several of the church's early members assembled at the First Baptist

Church of Nicholson, MS for their forty-fifth gathering with Irma Frierson presiding over the occasion. Mrs. Frierson read a letter from Dr. Franklin Atkinson, a former pastor of the Santa Rosa church, who stated "I delight in the Cooperative Program report each year and have had occasions to use it to stimulate others." Though the reunion had few participants, an exceptionally fine spirit was evident among all those present.



These ladies are some of the earliest members of SRBC: Eloise Burrell, Irma Frierson, Vera Beech, Carolyn Raby, Dr. Daniel Hall -MBF

Leaning on God: West Jackson Baptist & Robinson Street Baptist

West Jackson Baptist Church was established shortly after World War II under the leadership of Rev. J. F. Sullivan and sixteen charter members. During the lengthy ministry of the Rev. Jack Nazzary, hundreds of new members enjoyed the facilities that were constructed during this growing period of the church's history.

Following nearly fifty years of vibrant ministry in Jackson, however, the congregants of the West Jackson Baptist Church were confronted with the challenging reality that the majority of the membership that once lived in proximity to the church facilities had dispersed toward the Jackson suburbs of Clinton and Madison. Many of those who remained in the local ministry area were moving rapidly toward retirement and fixed incomes. According to pastor Larry Dunlap, the church realized that the situation could not go unaddressed so "we were all praying for the direction God would lead us" because "we knew we had to do something." The church's leaders sought a feasible approach for maintaining a viable ministry presence in the community. Relocation was explored but quickly dismissed as an unsuitable option.

In the absence of a workable plan for West Jackson's continued operation, the church elected representatives to begin the process of dis-

solving the church and dispensing the assets. Paul Haynes was elected as the president of the executive committee charged with handling the dissolution process.

During the time that the active membership of West Jackson Baptist Church was dwindling, the congregation of the Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church was experiencing robust growth which left their own facilities insufficient for continued expansion. In answer to the West Jackson's prayers for God's leadership and direction, the Rev. Jesse Horton of EMBC inquired about the availability of the West Jackson Baptist Church facilities. Horton's initial inquiry started a sequence of discussions, prayer gatherings, and other meetings that led to the eventual decision by West Jackson Baptist Church to sell their buildings and property to Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Despite the sadness of ending their own ministry in the area, the members of West Jackson were keenly aware of God's obvious involvement with the transfer of the WJBC property to Emmanuel. With the statement, "God was preparing another group to carry on His work," Paul Haynes affirmed West Jackson's

recognition of God's involvement.

With the exchange of ministry from West Jackson to Emmanuel and the sale of the accompanying property to EBMC, the proceeds derived from this transfer were invested with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation through the establishment of the "West Jackson Baptist Church Trust." The earnings stemming from the investment of the fund's corpus provides perpetual benefit for several Baptist causes including the Baptist Children's Village, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, and the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering. Since the creation of this endowment in August 1995, over \$200,000 has been distributed to these designated causes.

Former members of the West Jackson Baptist Church gather once or twice each year to share fellowship and memories. The most recent reunion took place last Saturday at the Western Sizzlin' in Ridgeland with over forty people participating. Included in this group were West Jackson Baptist Church pastors Jack Nazzary and Malcomb Massey as well as Bill Jones who served the church as interim pastor.



Rev. Malcomb Massey, Rev. Jack Nazzary, Rev. Bill Jones

Robinson Street Baptist Church

With a history similar to West Jackson Baptist, the Robinson Street Baptist Church ministered to their community and throughout the city of Jackson from their home base located on the corner of Ellis Avenue and Robinson Street for thirty-seven years beginning in 1950. During the formative years of the church, facilities were built as the membership grew and ministries expanded.

After less than 20 years, however, the community surrounding the church's worship and ministry site began to shift from a high-growth to a transitional area. Although the church continued serving despite a decline in membership, the congregation began to recognize that they weren't postured to minister in the community to the extent and with the effectiveness that was needed. In 1987, the church made the difficult decision to discontinue ministering as the Robinson Street Baptist Church and sold the church

property and facilities to an African-American congregation.

The proceeds from the sale of the church property were invested with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation as an endowment for missions and ministry. The trust documentation that established the "Robinson Street Baptist Church Trust" calls for several Baptist ministries to receive a portion of the annual earnings. Included among these ministries are the Baptist Children's Village, Collegiate Ministry (BSU) in Mississippi, Mississippi College, and the Metro Baptist Association.

While the Robinson Street Baptist Church no longer meets as a congregation of believers on the corner of Ellis Avenue and Robinson Street, the trust fund administered by the Foundation continues to perpetuate the memory and ministry of the church as nearly \$900,000 has been distributed for the advancement of Kingdom endeavors since the inception of the trust fund.

Where Faith Abounds: Faith Baptist Church

Change, Exchange, and Rearrange define the nearly 10-year ministry of the Faith Baptist Church in north Jackson. When the Broadmoor Baptist Church made the decision in the late 90s to relocate their ministry base from Northside Drive in the capitol city to Madison, the church made a ministry exchange of sorts by selling the Broadmoor facilities and property to the Wesley Biblical Seminary. In the midst of this change and exchange, a portion of Broadmoor's membership remained in the local area and established Faith Baptist Church.

Initially, the congregation met at Chastain Jr. High School located on Northside Drive across from Broadmoor's former campus. Eventually, however, the group returned to a more intimate and familiar setting as they began leasing the chapel from Wesley Seminary for worship. For several years, the church focused on mission and ministry in their community.

Toward the end of 2007, the church was faced with the decision to rearrange their focus as the church's lease arrangement with the seminary was not scheduled to be renewed. Confronted with the prospect of no longer having a ministry home for the church, some of Faith's leadership began exploring the possibility of merging with another area church. In the end, the congregation voted to disband. The church determined further to rearrange



Rev. Cliff Davis, Rev. Ed Trott, Ann Hamilton, Dr. Daniel Hall - MBF

their ministry in a perpetual fashion through the establishment of a trust fund with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation.

Holding their last official services in January, 2008, the church presented a check for \$100,000 to the Foundation for the "Faith Baptist Church Mission Trust." The annual earnings from this trust are designated for equal distribution to the

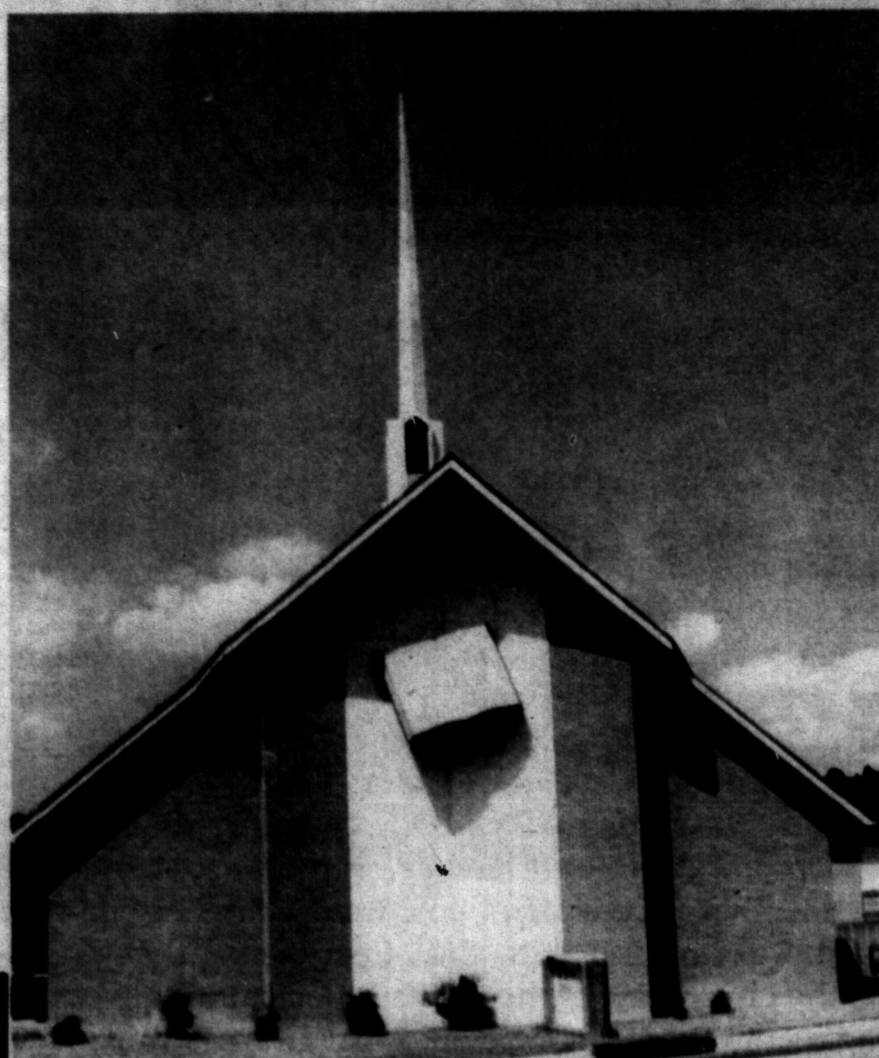
International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for the planting of new churches. Only eternity will register the untold numbers of people across the globe that will receive and accept the gospel message by faith because of a small group of faithful servants known as Faith Baptist Church.

Opening New Doors: McDowell Road Baptist Church

Following a stellar ministry that began in South Jackson in 1954, the McDowell Road Baptist Church decided to close their doors and disband in late 2005. For years, the church had been confronted with a transitional ministry area and an aging membership. These, and other factors, contributed to a continual decline in the number of worshipers meeting in a sizeable facility.

Upon reaching the decision to disband, the congregation voted to establish the "McDowell Baptist Church Mission Trust" with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation as a perpetual reminder of the manner in which God used MRBC to provide a source of blessing in South Jackson and around the world. The purposes for which the annual earnings are designated include the Baptist Children's Village, MBCB Disaster Relief, and Baptist Homes/Son Valley. Although this mission trust is slated to receive primary funding following the disposition of the church facilities, a number of McDowell Road Baptist Church members make regular contributions to this mission trust.

Certainly, churches don't intend on disbanding when first started but sometimes congregations determine to move in other directions for a variety of reasons. The new direction may result in a complete Change, an Exchange of ministry, or even a Rearrange. Regardless of the circumstances or sequence of events that led to the decision to disband, a church can continue to encourage Baptist ministries through a perpetual endowment with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. As "laborers together with God," we can achieve Kingdom goal of bringing Mississippi and the world to Jesus.



Mississippi Baptist Foundation, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205
or call 800-748-1682 or 601-292-3210

JUST FOR THE RECORD



13. Atkins recognition, Harrisburg Church



14. Lee ordination, Franklin Creek Church

13. **Harrisburg Church, Tupelo**, honored Sam Atkins for 56 years of perfect attendance in Sunday School. Shown are Anna Atkins, Atkins, Patti Robey, and Ed Page.

14. **Franklin Creek Church, Moss Point**, ordained Paul Lee Oct. 19. Shown are Betsy Lee, Emma Grace Lee, Lee, and pastor John Pemberton.

15. **Sylvarena Church, Wesson**, ordained Bryan Letchworth and Jimmie Bufkin as deacons Nov. 9. Shown are Letchworth, Deemie Letchworth, Rena Bufkin, and Bufkin.

16. **First Church, Fannin, Dallas** Holm in concert Nov. 23 8:30 am & 10:50 am

17. **Arlington Church, Bogue Chitto**, will be conducting a dedication and worship service Nov. 23, 11 a.m., for their newly-renovated sanctuary and educational building, followed by lunch.

18. **Macedonia Church, Petal**, celebrated Senior Adult Day Oct. 12 by recognizing their senior adults during the morning worship service. More than 100 senior

adults participated; the service was followed by lunch in their honor.

19. **Crossgates Church, Brandon**, is presenting Crossgates Christmas Unlimited Dec. 12, 7 p.m. and Dec. 13 - 14, 3:30 and 7 p.m. Ticketed event; call (601) 824-2775 or visit www.crossgates.org for complimentary tickets.

20. **Highland Church, Meridian**, is presenting its 24th annual Singing Christmas Tree Dec. 11-14, 7 p.m. nightly, plus 4 p.m. pre-

sentations Saturday and Sunday. Free tickets are available at the church office, or by mail by sending a SASE to Singing Christmas Tree, Highland Baptist Church, 3400 27th St., Meridian, MS 39305. The church requests that ticket holders bring unwrapped toys or canned food.

11. **Bill Monaghan Ministries** is available for revivals, homecomings, senior programs, concerts, transitional supply, or special events. Call (662) 256-4138 or 640-2514 for information.



15. Deacon ordination, Sylvarena Church



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Study: Small church vision often stalled by infighting

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Most pastors of smaller-membership Southern Baptist churches see what God is calling their congregations to be and do and have laid the groundwork for accomplishing the mission, but their efforts to lead are frustrated by turf battles and a failure to clarify and evaluate plans, according to a new study by LifeWay Research.

Findings of the study, published in the November/December issue of Facts & Trends, suggest that pastors could see their smaller-membership congregations make progress by evaluating church ministries, organizing to reach their goals and planning for the future. Facts & Trends is the official news magazine of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The effectiveness of local church ministry often is jeopardized by poor organization," said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. "Understanding God's calling and the context of the church is important, but leadership requires knowing where you are, knowing where you need to go and knowing how to get there. Most small-church pastors actively pursue the first two but many struggle with the third."

The study entailed an online survey last March that included 350 pastors of congregations averaging fewer than 100 in primary worship attendance. It found, among other things, that 67% of small-church pastors are frustrated with how slowly progress is made at their church.

The inertia, however, isn't for lack of trying. According to the study:

- Most pastors of small churches have assessed their church's cultural context. Three-fourths have studied their communities. Ninety percent have examined trends in their congregation. Seventy-one percent say they try to be actively involved in their community.

- Most pastors of small churches see what God is calling their church to be and do. Ninety-four percent say they clearly see the needs, hurts and problems God is calling their church to address. Eight out of 10 have shared with the congregation a clear, compelling picture of what God is calling their church to look like several years from now.

The obstacles to missional progress, however, are familiar to every pastor. While two-thirds of the pastors surveyed indicated their church makes regular changes to improve their effectiveness, 49% said lay leaders in the congregation often resist change to protect their area of responsibility.

One-third of them said their church had experienced disruptive conflict in the past year.

"No doubt spiritual failures hold churches back more than leadership or administrative shortcomings," McConnell said. "Discouraging baptism and membership trends in the Southern Baptist Convention show us that change is needed in many local congregations, but change requires leadership."

"LifeWay Research wanted to find out whether basic leadership activities are occurring in smaller Southern Baptist churches. While we found that many key activities are occurring, we were able to identify significant shortcomings in planning and process improvement."

Many pastors of small churches candidly admitted they do not know how to lead their church where they need to go, McConnell reported.

Only 29% of small-church pastors strongly agreed that they have a clear plan to accomplish the things God has called their church to do. Forty-four percent agreed (strongly or somewhat) that they often don't understand why things they try don't work. Thirty percent agreed that they are confused about where they should invest their own time and effort.

The problem is compounded by the fact that many churches fail to plan or even evaluate their current activities, the survey revealed. Although 70% of the pastors said the allocation of their church budget adequately funds current objectives, 40% agreed their church rarely has time to step back and plan appropriately.

While more than half of pastors, 57%, have written a vision or mission statement adopted by their church, two-thirds rarely change who is responsible for certain work or responsibilities. Leadership in fewer than six in 10 churches regularly evaluates methods and results of events and programs.

"The survey clearly indicates that smaller-membership churches need to stop and evaluate what they are

doing and who is doing it," McConnell said. "Leaders need to develop effective plans for carrying out the work God has called their churches to do."


Leading a church requires both vision and administrative ability, McConnell said. Many pastors, though, are much stronger in one area than the other.

"The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28 taught that God places teachers in the church and also gives the gift of managing," he said. "But he never promised both those gifts would be in the same person."



"Pastors who candidly assess their own strengths and

weaknesses can surround themselves with leaders who have the talents that they lack," McConnell said. "Each local church should seek out and utilize members gifted in organizing people and processes while still encouraging each other to desire the greater gifts of faith, hope and love."

The PowerPoint report, Leadership Issues for the Small Church, is available at www.lifewayresearch.com. The online study was conducted in March among 801 pastors, 350 of whom were pastors of smaller-membership congregations, defined as those with an average primary worship attendance of less than 100.



Open dates in early 2009:
 February 8
 March 22 (One Day)
 April 5
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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. **First Church, Mathison:** Revival, Nov. 19 – 23; Wed. – Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Bob Pitman, speaker; Byron Benson, music.

Student ministers meet for Retreat

The Discipleship and Family Ministries Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board sponsored a Student Minister's Retreat at Lake Tiak O'Khata near Louisville on Nov. 10 – 12.

The retreat included meetings by region, spouses' sessions, and other topics including Transitioning Students from High School to College, Student and Parent Ministry, Bringing Life Back Into Student Bible Study, and the Student Minister's Need for Refuge.

According to Ken Hall, consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministries Department, "This meeting was designed to build fellowship among our state student ministers, and to provide training and encouragement."

"A challenge in youth ministry is to provide programs for the students that fit into

their schedules. Students are busy and overextended. So we want to have quality and not program just for the sake of doing something," Hall said. "I hope all these guys go back home encouraged to stay the course, and that

they've found some other guys they can call, that they know they're not alone in ministry, and can share some ideas with each other."

Pictured are several student ministers praying during one of their small group sessions.



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Homosexual protest results in arrests at Union Univ.

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Three members of Souforce, a homosexual activist group, were arrested November 10 for trespassing on the campus of Baptist-affiliated Union University in Jackson, Tn.

The group rejected accommodations university officials had made for a dialogue requested by Souforce and instead created a public confrontation, according to a Union spokesman.

Union was the next-to-last stop on the 2008 Souforce Equality Ride, an annual tour of schools the group uses to get publicity for homosexual issues. Souforce has used similar campus visits in the past to create disturbances and get media attention for their cause.

The group's protest in October at Mississippi College in Clinton included a candlelight vigil for homosexual rights and the arrest of two Souforce members for trespassing on the Baptist-affiliated school's campus.

The Souforce website says the purpose of the Equality Ride is to engage academic communities in dialogue "through informal conversation and educational programming [to] explore concepts of diversity, comparing the effects of inclusive and exclusive viewpoints." It also states that Souforce seeks "freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance."

Arrangements were made for dialogue when the group informed Union they would be stopping at the campus, said Tim Ellsworth, Union's director of news and media relations.

"With exchange of viewpoints in mind, Union University allowed the Equality Riders onto its private property and set up a place for them in Luther Hall with conversation areas, a kitchen and restroom facilities," Ellsworth said in a prepared statement.

"A private donor offered the riders lunch and dinner for Monday and Tuesday, along with soft drinks and snacks throughout the day. Union University announced to all interested students, faculty, and staff that the riders were available to engage in informal discussions inside or outside of Luther Hall.

"Union University also offered to set up a meeting between riders and faculty members at Luther Hall."

Souforce leaders rejected those arrangements shortly after their arrival, Ellsworth said. "Instead [of accepting Union's preparations for dialogue], members of the group chose to stand vigil outside in areas where traffic flow made it difficult for people to stop and initiate discussions.



MC PROTEST — Souforce Equality Ride participants line the College Street sidewalk at the rear of the Mississippi College campus in Clinton on October 20 to protest what they allege are discriminatory practices against homosexuals at the Baptist-affiliated university. Souforce members are touring the country, protesting and getting arrested at a number of schools that have policies prohibiting homosexual activity. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

"Three members of the group chose to disrespect Union's private property rights and advance into an area that had been described several times as off limits to the riders. They were arrested without incident after several warnings to vacate the area."

Union's president, David S. Dockery, said in a prepared statement that the school had no intention of legitimizing the activist group with an official forum and had decided to limit their presence "to a portion of the campus away from residential life and the academic buildings."

While Union sought "to be kind and courteous in every way, it would be irresponsible of us to offer any public forum on such serious issues to a group of individuals that we do not know and who do not know us," Dockery said.

"We must recognize that this group has not been invited to Union and has no investment in or accountability to our academic community or campus life."

In addition to Mississippi College and Union University, Souforce activists participating in this tour have been arrested at Palm Beach Atlantic

University in West Palm Beach, FL, and Central Baptist College in Conway, Ar. Protestors have also met with officials of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas.

In 2007, 12 members were arrested during a sit-in at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and 24 were arrested in March 2006 for trespassing on the campus of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. Several protestors were also arrested on the campus of Mississippi College during an earlier protest in 2007.

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Pastors released, woman stoned

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Charges of apostasy, or leaving Islam, against two pastors in Iran were dismissed, apparently on false grounds. One observer believes the move was designed to help the Iranian government save face in light of international pressure over its human rights record.

Mahmoud Matin Azad, 52, and Arash Basirat, 44, were acquitted of the charge September 25 by a judge in Shiraz. A court document stated that both men "denied that they had converted to Christianity and said that they remain Muslim, and accordingly the court found no further evidence to the contrary," according to Compass Direct news service.

Azad said he and Basirat not only did not deny leaving Islam but were very plain about their faith in Christ. "The first question that they asked me was, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I am a pastor pastoring a house church in Iran,'" Azad told Compass Direct. "All my [court] papers are about Christianity — about my activity, about our church, and everything."

Joseph Grieboski, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, believes the dismissal of the case was the result of political pressure. "If the court did in fact lie about what he said, I

would think it's part of the larger political game that [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and his factions are trying to play to garner political support for him," Grieboski told Compass Direct.

Todd Nettleton of Voice of the Martyrs pointed out that Iranian lawmakers are considering imposing the death penalty on anyone who leaves Islam. "The church is growing at simply an amazing rate. That is a part of the reason the government is so nervous about the Christians," Nettleton told Mission Network News.

"That is part of the reason they're striking back and changing laws. That also means more people potentially face persecution; more people need our prayers."

Meanwhile, a 23-year-old woman was stoned to death October 27 in Kismayu, Somalia, by Islamic extremists who accused her of adultery. Asha Ibrahim Dhuhulow's death reportedly was the first such execution in two years.

When a family member tried to intervene, guards opened fire, killing a child. The crowd of people assembled for the execution were told she had submitted herself for the punishment, but eyewitnesses told the Reuters news service the woman was screaming as she was bound hand and foot.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a gift of honor and memory. Many people and individual families have graciously donated to this special project. We are grateful for their generosity and the love they have shown for the children of The Baptist Children's Village.

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Holiday Project Ideas

If your family, school, church or civic group is seeking a project for the Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday, The Baptist Children's Village invites you to partner with us. Listed below are ways you can help. You will also find this information posted at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com along with other BCV needs.

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On October 18, 2008 the ladies of Laguna and Swannanoa Social Tribes of Mississippi College folded and stuffed The Baptist Children's Village annual Christmas mail appeal. These ladies worked hard and worked fast to make sure these letters were sent out to BCV friends in a timely fashion. If you did not receive a letter, but would like to make a donation and be included in future mailings you may send your donation to P.O. Box 27, Clinton, MS 39060 or make your donation online at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.



Mrs. Mildred Turner served The Baptist Children's Village as a houseparent on the India Nunnery Campus in Jackson for 15 years. Now at 92 years old, she resides in George County. Recently, she attended the Annual Fall Association Meeting of George County held at Pine Level Baptist Church where Celeste Cade, Public Relations Associate of The Baptist Children's Village, presented the BCV report to the association. Mrs. Turner is pictured with George-Greene Baptist Association Missions Director, Rev. Jimmy Holcomb.



BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

My Heart-Healthy Church

Romans 14:1, 10-13, 19-21; 15:1-6

By Bobby McKay

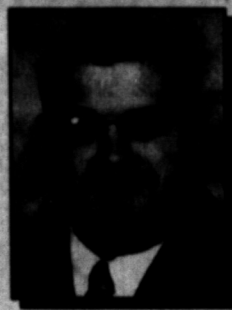
Quick! Name two things Baptists are known for in most communities. As the one posing the question, I am aware that I have had more time to think of an answer. What did you come up with? The items that came to my mind the quickest were food and fussing. Baptists love to eat. I remember as a child when the word "fellowship" was announced, a divine appointment with food was in my immediate future. On the flip side, it is almost impossible to find a Southern Baptist church that has not had their share of arguments or dissension. What is both shameful and ironic are those individuals that eagerly share a meal with other members of the church, as well as sow seeds of discord within the same body of believ-

ers. Few things could be more blasphemous than a church member who thrives on disharmony within the fellowship. Terry Ledbetter, a pastor friend of mine, probably said it best when he stated, "Some Baptists are born again and some are born against".

I had the idea one time that we should combine these two staples of church life and have a big food fight. Thankfully, Scriptures address the struggle of unity that every church faces. So put down that chicken leg and pick up your Bible with me.

I. Red Rover (Romans 14:1, 10-12)

Do you remember the rules of the childhood game red rover? The rules of red rover were simple: dominate or be dominated. If you had the com-



McKay

ination of strength and speed you could break through the interlocked arms of the opposing team. If this was accomplished, you could take someone from their team and they became a part of your team. If you failed to penetrate the opposition you became a part of them. It is a simple game of strategy, dominance, and numbers. When the rival team called out your name, you looked for the weakest link to pierce so as to assure the greatest chance of victory.

Does any of this jog your memory? Do any of these rules sound like how we treat prospective members of the church? To celebrate in the weakness others is not a godly behavior. Many churches have adopted the mindset that some do not meet the "standard" to be a member of "their" congregation. In these verses Paul wrote not only to rebuke these early believers, but to encourage them to "accept the one who is weak in faith" (NASB).

Paul is not referring to lost people, rather brothers and sisters in Christ. How sad it is when Christians choose to hurt and prey on fellow believers.

II. Rehearsed Rights (Romans 14:13, 19-21)

At the root of all this is pride. When we concern ourselves with critiquing everyone in the church, we begin to act in a self righteous manner. One primary indication of a prideful attitude is the constant assertion of one's rights. Many would rather promote their individual causes and agendas than act benevolently toward a struggling member of the church. These individuals have their rights and privileges rehearsed and are quick to let you know of their piety. Most conflicts in the church stem from the promotion of rights over the promotion of the gospel. The trouble with this type of behavior is the effect it has on others. Paul conveyed in verse 13 the danger pride can have in a Christian's life. He wrote when someone judges another they become a stumbling block to those around him or her.

III. Righteous Reproach (Romans 15:1-6)

Who better to bring clarity to all of these issues than Jesus? Paul used the life of Christ to provide a reproach to churches for all generations. We see in these verses the urging to imitate Jesus. With all of our buildings, budgets, and beliefs, how good a job are we doing when it comes to resembling the Lord? There is no more crucial calling for the church to heed than modeling and sharing with our communities and neighborhoods the good news of salvation provided by Jesus.

Many church leaders wonder why people are not attracted to the local church like they used to be. I cannot make a long list of promises in regards to where you attend worship services, but I assure you of one thing. If we serve our fellow man, imitate Jesus, and strive for unity, the local church will be blessed and used by God in astonishing ways.

McKay is pastor of Oakvale Church, Oak Vale.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

When Family Bonds Shatter

2 Samuel 13:1-20:26

By Ginger M. Caughman

Devastation. Severe fires burned vast areas in Yellowstone National Park in 1988. Visiting Yellowstone this year with friends from Mississippi, we saw a twenty-year growth of green lodgepole pines that sprouted from the ashes. The story is remarkable for the lodgepole pine has two kinds of cones. When the tree is young (5 to 10 years) regular cones grow, which open when the seeds are ripe. But the second type is called a serotinous (suh-RAH-tuh-nus) cone and only opens after a fire! When trees are 20 to 30 years old they start growing these serotinous cones. Resin holds the serotinous cone closed until melted by fire; then the scales of the cone dry out, curl open and the seeds are released to grow in the charcoal forest. A truly amazing action of God's creation. New

life planned from ashes.

The LifeWay editors structured our study cycle: "Reading all of 1 and 2 Samuel will find you immersed in a page-turning story. Unavoidably nine of the thirteen lessons have a background passage in excess of three chapters." This week's study tops the list with eight chapters! Take time to read the entire background.

All of our families experience occasional conflict. "The consequences of David's wrong-doing were tragically reflected in the royal family for years to come" (Hester).

Sin is rampant among Christian people today. Beth Moore addressed the problem in: "When Godly People Do Ungodly Things: Arming Yourself in the Age of Seduction," (LifeWay, 2003).

David's son Amnon lusted after his half-sister Tamar,



Caughman

deceived, then raped her.

Guilty, he sent her away. She took refuge in her brother Absalom's house. Absalom plotted revenge and had Amnon murdered. Chaos resulted. Absalom had to flee into exile. David grieved the loss of two sons, one murdered and another exiled. (Ch. 13)

In time, David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem but the reconciliation was incomplete for David refused to see Absalom (Ch. 14). "Four years later the crown prince mounted an insurrection against the king and attempted to steal the kingdom from David." (Ch. 15). Absalom won support away from his father and many Israelites followed him. Once again David was on the run! "David believed that God's vengeance or mercies alone would decide his fate" (Ch 16).

The battles were planned; Advice given. All Israel knew David was a fighter and his soldiers were brave. David's

friends refreshed his tired and hungry army (Ch. 17).

At the time of Absalom's rebellion, David wrote a remarkable Psalm of "peaceful trust at a trying time" (Halley). Read Psalm 3 in four parts: David complains to God concerning his enemies (1-2), declares his confidence in God (3-4), sings of his safety in sleep (5-6), strengthens himself for future conflict (7-8) (Spurgeon).

The account of Absalom's death shows David's anguish as a father (Ch. 18). David returned to Jerusalem and was restored as leader. An undercurrent of strife remained between Israel and Judah (Ch. 19). Yet another rebellion occurred with a violent aftermath (Ch. 20).

The lesson purpose is to seek reconciliation in our families without retaliation. A lofty task! Our human nature is to get back at someone who hurts us. God is the only one who can solve these complex issues in our hearts, lives, and families. As we seek to live by Scripture, let's allow the power of Christ to enable us to forgive and love when family bonds shatter!

There's much bloodshed in today's lesson. You may be reading this newspaper looking for hope. "Many title Psalm 3 'The Morning Hymn.' In the light of David's tragic lesson, let us look to Jesus with hope: May we ever wake with holy confidence in our hearts and a song upon our lips!" (Spurgeon)

My friend Belinda Murphy (mother of Slater Murphy, talented pianist for the "Singing Churchmen") taught me this habit of praise years ago when we both lived in Louisiana. "Every morning when your feet touch your slippers, repeat 'This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it!'"

Turn to the Lord God in the deepest fires of life. Have you seen a geode? The mountain rock is gray stained stone outside, but fired in the depths of the earth, the splendid inside is lined with crystals or layers of silica. Beautiful! Let Jesus gather your shattered fragments (John 6:12-13 KJV) and redeem your life (Jer. 22:11-14).

Caughman teaches a senior ladies Sunday School class at First Church Magee.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Fireproof movie executive producer looks to future

ALBANY, Ga. (BP and local reports) — Heading into its eighth weekend, *Fireproof*, the latest film from the moviemakers at Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga., has grossed more than \$28 million. The church, though, has not made anywhere close to that amount.

As is the case with Hollywood movies, the total gross from *Fireproof* is split numerous ways, beginning with the theater owners, who will have kept roughly half of the total gross once *Fireproof* leaves theaters, officials with the movie say.

After that, each of the various partners who advertised, promoted, and distributed the film — Sony Pictures, Goldwyn Films, Provident Films, and Carmel Entertainment — get a cut. The church then gets its cut.

Jim McBride, an executive producer for the movie and executive pastor at Sherwood Church, said the church has a policy not to discuss publicly what it makes from its films or DVD sales, although he did say it's a "far cry" from what it has grossed at the box office.

McBride traveled to Mississippi earlier this year to supervise the pre-release screenings of the movie for local church staff and news media.

All of the church's proceeds, McBride said, have gone to the church's Generations campaign — a fundraising campaign to pay for a new five million dollar sanctuary and to build an 82-acre, four million dollar sports park.

The sanctuary has been completed for several years, while construction on the sports park — which will be open to all the city's residents and will be used for outreach — began in 2004.

"We commonly say at the church that with one of these movies we've felt like the little boy with five loaves and two fish who gave what little he had to Jesus and stood back in awe at what God did," McBride told Baptist Press.

"We're continually amazed at the success of the



movie. We decided that if the Lord chose to bless the movies, then we wanted to use that [money] for outreach just like we wanted to use the movies to reach the world for Christ."

When completed, the sports park will have walking trails, fishing ponds, horse stables and riding trails, tennis courts, and softball fields. It is a "huge undertaking," said McBride, who is seen briefly in a non-speaking role in *Fireproof* and played the role of a bombastic football coach in the church's previous movie, *Facing the Giants* (2006).

"We wanted it to be for our entire region a place that families could come and it would be a family friendly evangelistic park," he said. "We targeted any funds that come in from the movie to go into that Generations campaign. From the beginning, we already had the funds designated."

Fireproof was made for \$500,000, while *Facing the Giants*, which grossed \$10 million at the box

office, was filmed for \$100,000. *Fireproof* opened in more than 80 new theaters this past weekend, including, for the first time, a theater in Rhode Island.

The movie has now shown in all 50 states. "We never went into this, from even the beginning, to make money," McBride said. "We certainly want to be good stewards, but at the same time we're making the movies for ministry."

That philosophy has translated to the sale of the movies on DVD. *Flywheel*, the church's first movie in 2003, and *Facing the Giants* are available in 13 languages, a rarity for a movie.

"Each one of those languages is an additional expense, but we paid the additional expense to put them in there because that's another people group that will be reached," McBride said.

"From a business model standpoint, some of our partners would say, 'Let's start off with a couple of languages, the ones that will sell the most,' but we're not interested in that aspect as much as we are in reaching more people for Christ."

Some fans of Sherwood Church's movies no doubt already are curious about the subject matter of the church's next movie. McBride, though, said church officials have yet to make any decisions about the topic of a future movie — or even if there will be one.

All of their movies, he said, are "birthed in a season of prayer." At some point in December, he said, he will join senior pastor and Mississippi native Michael Catt and associate pastors Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick in praying and seeking God's will. The Kendricks wrote the screenplay for all three films.

"Everyone would love to see us make another movie, but more important than what we want is what God wants," McBride said. "So we're going to go to a season of prayer in December for a week where we'll seclude ourselves."

For more information about *Fireproof*, visit Fireproof-TheMovie.com. For resources, visit FireproofMyMarriage.com.

Who controls monuments? U.S. Supreme Court to decide issue

WASHINGTON (BP) — A city should not be required to include an exhibit from an unorthodox religious sect in a public park just because it has accepted a Ten Commandments monument for display in that setting, an attorney argued before the U.S. Supreme Court on November 12.

The high court heard oral arguments in the review of a lower court decision that opponents fear could result in the removal of numerous monuments, such as those of the Ten Commandments and honoring military veterans, or the inclusion of a plethora of unusual, even objectionable, displays.

The case, *Pleasant Grove City v. Summum*, involves a Utah city's attempt to prevent a barely 30-year-old religious sect from placing a monument of its principles next to a Ten Commandments exhibit in a park. Pleasant Grove City denied the request in 2003, and the sect, known as Summum, filed suit.

Summum alleged the city's decision violated its federal free-speech rights, as well as Utah's protection of free expression and prohibition on establishment of religion.

A three-judge panel of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed in 2007, finding the park was a public forum and the city had abridged Summum's freedom of speech as protected by the First Amendment.

The judges ruled the violation of Summum's First Amendment rights surpassed the potential harm to the city, which contended its park would be overwhelmed with monuments if the court sided with the sect.

Arguing on behalf of Pleasant Grove City, Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice,

told the justices the 10th Circuit Court erred both by concluding the Ten Commandments monument constitutes private speech instead of government speech and by deciding the park is a "traditional public forum."

"Here each of the monuments on display in Pioneer Park [has] been selected by the government, are owned by the government, controlled by the government, and are displayed on government property," said Sekulow. "When the government is speaking, it is free from the traditional free speech constraints of the First Amendment."

Chief Justice John Roberts quickly challenged Sekulow, telling him, "[Y]ou're really just picking your poison, aren't you? I mean, the more you say that the monument is government speech to get out of the... free speech clause [of the First Amendment], the more it seems to me you're walking into a trap under the establishment clause [of the First Amendment]. If it's government speech, it may not present a free-speech problem, but what is the government doing... supporting the Ten Commandments?"

Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy followed Roberts by telling Sekulow, "[I]t does seem to me that if you say it's government speech, that in later cases, including the case of the existing [Ten Commandments] monument, you're going to say it's government speech, and you have an establishment clause problem."

Summum did not sue under the federal establishment clause, and the 10th Circuit's ruling was not based on First Amendment language that prohibits government establishment of religion, Sekulow replied to the justices.

The city established Pioneer Park "to show the pioneer heritage of the community. This was a community of pioneers on a quest for religious liberty," Sekulow said. The city accepted the Ten Commandments exhibit from the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1971 "to represent their pioneer heritage," he said.

The government owns and controls the display — and its message — after it receives it from a private organization, Sekulow said.

Daryl Joseffer, deputy solicitor general, told the court on behalf of the federal government that it is clear the government can choose "the content and viewpoint of monuments on the National Mall" and in other public parks.

"The Vietnam Veterans memorial did not open us up to a Viet Cong memorial," Joseffer said. "When the Martin Luther King Memorial is completed on the mall, it will not have to be offset by a monument to the man who shot Dr. King."

Pamela Harris, representing Summum, told the justices Pleasant Grove City's refusal to accept the sect's monument is a "violation of the core free-speech principle that the government may not favor one message over another in a public forum."

Associate Justice Antonin Scalia challenged Harris, asking, "Is it a public forum for everything? It may be a public forum for processions, for parades. But... is it a public forum for anybody constructing a monument?"

Harris said a city "is permitted to make a decision that it will close its public parks to all unattended displays."

Roberts asked her, "How far do you push that? I mean, you have a Statue of Liberty; do we have to have a stat-

ue of despotism? Or do we have to put any president who wants to be on Mount Rushmore?"

The government could respond by adopting a "privately formulated message as its own... clearly and publicly," Harris said, adding it is unclear Pleasant Grove City is speaking through the Ten Commandments monument. "It can put up a plaque; it can designate it a city monument."

Veterans associations and other entities have taken the threat to current monuments seriously. The Utah cities of Salt Lake City and Ogden both removed Ten Commandments displays in order to prevent Summum from placing its monuments on city property.

The sect's proposed monument in Pleasant Grove City would contain the Aphorisms of Summum, seven principles the group teaches were a higher law inscribed on the first set of tablets brought down from Mount Sinai, which subsequently were broken by Moses, according to the book of Exodus in the Bible.

The Ten Commandments are lower laws, according to Summum, given to the Hebrews on the second set of tablets.

The late Corky Nowell, a former Mormon elder, founded Summum in 1975 after what he described as encounters with intelligent beings during meditation.

Summum is the only organization in the world that provides mummification services, according to its website. Mummification, Summum's website says, "lends itself... to cloning for the specific purpose of spiritual progression."

Pleasant Grove City has a population of about 30,000 and is located in north-central Utah. An opinion in the case is expected to be issued next summer.